



Wyoming Department of Agriculture

2219 Carey Ave., Cheyenne, WY 82002 ■ Phone: 307-777-7321 ■ Fax: 307-777-6593
E-mail: wda1.state.wy.us ■ Website: wyagric.state.wy.us

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John Etchepare, Director

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April 13, 2004

Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment
Northern Region Headquarters
P.O. Box 7669
Missoula, MT 59807

Dear U.S. Forest Service Officials:

Following are our comments on the Northern Rockies Lynx Amendment Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Our comments are specific to our mission within state government which is to be dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources, and quality of life. As this proposed project will have major impacts upon our agriculture industry, our natural resources, and the welfare of our citizens, we believe it's important that we be kept informed of proposed actions and decisions and that we continue to be provided the opportunity to express pertinent issues and concerns.

It is well understood that the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management play a critical role in providing wildlife habitat. However, it our position that Wyoming does not possess habitat necessary to support the survival of the lynx, making a critical habitat designation in Wyoming incomprehensible.

To reemphasize what we stated in our scoping comments, Wyoming has never had sustaining lynx habitat, nor will the state have the habitat to support a lynx population in the foreseeable future. The historically scarce availability of the snowshoe hare in our state as a food source for Canada lynx verifies the fact that Wyoming does not provide sustaining habitat for this species.

Wyoming is located at the southern-most reach of traditional and common lynx habitat. Although lynx have been documented in Wyoming, the ability for the lynx to establish a continuing healthy population has never occurred. Wyoming forests are predominately lodgepole pine forests in an arid climate; which, consequently, do not provide suitable understory forage development or growth for either the snowshoe hare or Canada lynx. We encourage the associated federal agencies to spend their precious time and money on habitat areas in other states that provide suitable habitat for lynx; not on areas and management in Wyoming which provide little, if any, habitat benefit.

The Wyoming Department of Agriculture

is dedicated to the promotion and enhancement of Wyoming's agriculture, natural resources and quality of life.

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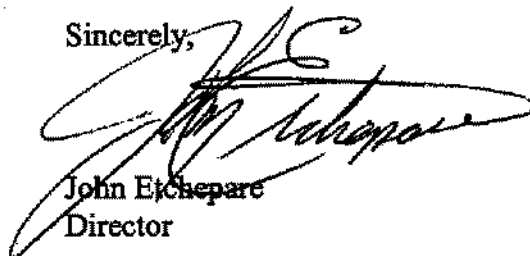
April 13, 2004

We also fear that this proposal will likely harm those species of animals which are actually present and dependent on the forests in Wyoming. Restrictions for individual species place further limitations on the effective management of all species, as well as on the management of land use and multiple-use activities. Forest management needs to remain flexible, with federal officials dedicated to the efficient management of their limited resources for many uses, many activities, and many species.

We encourage the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USFS, and BLM to (1) recognize the lack of ecosystem potential in Wyoming to support the continuing survival of lynx in Wyoming, and (2) not adversely affect the management of federal lands for a species which will never thrive in Wyoming forests. In Wyoming, we should not be establishing policies which will starve Canada lynx to their death.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Etchepare", is written over the typed name and title.

John Etchepare
Director

cc: Governor's Planning Office
WGFD